

*St. PAUL's Instruction to the
Christian Preacher.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
TRIENNIAL VISITATION

OF THE

Right Reverend Father in God

J O H N

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN;

HELD AT

All-Saints Church in Huntingdon,

on Friday June 4. 1756.

By JOHN PENNINGTON, A.M.

Rector of *All-Saints* in *Huntingdon*,

And Prebendary of *Lincoln*.

Published at the Request of His Lordship and the Clergy.



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M.DCC.LVI.

ST PAUL'S CHURCH TO THE
CITY OF LONDON

JOHN BURNINGTON, A.M.
Rector of St Paul's Church

THE REVEREND THE
BISHOP OF LINCOLN

THE COUNTY OF LINCOLN
THIS DISCOURSE



PRINTED BY J. BURNINGTON

IS MOST HUMBLY SUBMITTED

JOHN BURNINGTON, A.M.

Rector of St Paul's Church

St Paul's Church, London

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TO
The Right Reverend Father in God
J O H N
LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN;
AND TO
The Reverend the CLERGY
OF
The County of *Huntingdon*,

THIS DISCOURSE

Published at their Request
Is most humbly Inscribed,

BY
His LORDSHIP's dutiful Son,
And their affectionate Brother,

JOHN PENNINGTON.

1 TIM. iv. 10.

Take heed unto thy self, and unto the
 Doctrine; continue in them: for in
 doing this thou shalt save thy
 self, and them that hear thee.

THIS is the Advice of Paul to Timothy,
 whom he had ordained a Bishop, and a
 Preacher in the Church of Christ; Advice of
 no little Concern and Importance to him, to
 whom it was given, inasmuch as he tells him,
 that his own Salvation, and the Salvation of
 other People depended upon the Observance of

The Words do not require either a long Pre-
 face, or a long Comment, to let us into the
 meaning of them; they have but little Con-
 nection with the Verses before, and are, by
 themselves, plain and easy to be understood.

For to take heed unto Himself, was to be very
 careful and circumspect in his Morals; that his
 Life and Conversation might be altogether such
 as became a good Christian. To take heed unto
 the Doctrine, was to be careful and circumspect

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I TIM. iv. 16.

Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee.

THIS is the Advice of *Paul* to *Timothy*, whom he had ordained a Bishop, and a Preacher in the Church of Christ; Advice of no little Concern and Importance to him, to whom it was given; inasmuch as he tells him, that his own Salvation, and the Salvation of other People depended upon the Observance of it.

The Words do not require either a long Preface, or a long Comment, to let us into the Meaning of them; they have but little Connection with the Verses before; and are, by themselves, plain and easy to be understood.

For *to take heed unto Himself*, was to be very careful and circumspect in his Morals; that his Life and Conversation might be altogether such as became a good Christian. *To take heed unto his Doctrine*, was to be careful and circumspect
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in his Sermons; that his Doctrine might be found and good, agreeable to that of Christ; such as would instruct the People in the Principles, and Duties of Christianity; and that in such a Manner, as to convince them of the Truth, and persuade them to the Practice of it. *To continue in them*, was to be constant both in preaching sound Doctrine, and in living agreeably to the Doctrine he preached; because the one would recommend, and enforce the other; and be the happy Means of *saving himself, and them that heard him*: — *them that heard him*, not with the outward Ear only, but (as the original Word often means, and as it must mean here) them that heard him, as they ought to hear, *with an honest, and good heart*; and a sincere Design to practise what was taught them. — To all such Hearers the true Doctrine of Christ, enforced with the good Life of him that preached it, would be an effectual Means of Salvation; *for in doing this he should both save himself, and them that heard him*.

This seems to be the true and full Meaning of the Text; and I need not tell any of you, my Brethren, what should be the Plan of a Discourse upon it: You all know, that it should be to recommend and enforce the Advice contained in it. So that if the Text be suitable to

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the present Occasion, I have good Authority for making my Discourse suitable to the Text. — And if we, who are put in Trust with the Gospel, have the same Authority to preach, as *Timothy* had; if our own Salvation, and that of other People depends upon our Lives, and our Doctrine; we must take the Advice to *ourselves*; we are all equally concerned in the Observance of it; we are all equally affected with the Importance of it. It may therefore with Propriety and Truth be said to every one of us, *Take heed unto thy self, and unto thy Doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee.*

In the Text thus applied, we must observe,

I. The *Duty* it prescribes.

II. The *Reward* it proposes for our Encouragement.

I. The *Duty* it prescribes is *to take heed to ourselves*, i.e. to our own Lives; that we be good Men, exact and exemplary in the Practice of all Christian Virtues. — Not that this is peculiar to us that *preach*; it is the common Duty of all you that *hear*; for your Profession, as Christians, obliges you to *take heed to yourselves*; i.e. to let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ; to avoid Evil, and the very Appearance of it, that you may give no Offence

Offence to any Man ; to do good Works, that you may provoke others to do them ; to be blameless, and harmless, without Rebuke, and shine as Lights in the World, that you may by Example propagate Religion and Virtue in it: And this Obligation rises upon you in Proportion to the Stations and Circumstances you are in, and the Gifts and Talents you have : For as by these Means your Example is of greater Extent, and may have greater Influence upon the Morals of other People ; so in all these Things you are Stewards under God, and accountable to him for the good or bad Use you make of them.

Thus it is with *You*. But it is much more so with *Us*, who are ordained, or set apart to be the Teachers of the People : For as the Business of *our Office* is to inform the Understanding, and influence the Will ; to instruct Men in the Knowledge of what is good, and persuade them to the Practice of it ; how can we do this with Success, if we are defective in that which is good ? much less, if we are *Follower*s of that which is evil ? — It may be said, that a bad Man may preach good Doctrine, and have the Art of Oratory to set it off. But may it not be said again, that his Doctrine and his Oratory will avail but little, if his own Life contradicts both ? What comes from him

may

may reach the Ear, but will never affect the Heart; and if the Heart is not affected by it, how can it produce any good Fruit? — For it is an allowed Maxim, “that before you can persuade a Man into any Opinion, you must first convince him that you believe it your self:” If it be so in Matters of common Life, it is much more so in Matters of Religion; *that Religion*, which teaches the strictest Morals upon the Principle of future Rewards; and requires Men to deny themselves many Things in this World, in Hope of a Recompence for it in the next.

If *we* then, who preach this Religion and press it upon the People, and who by our Education and Employment, are supposed to know best the Truth and Importance of it; if *we*, I say, live agreeable to the Precepts of it, the People will naturally conclude that we are sincere in what we say; and that *they* must live, as *we* do, that they may be saved. But if *we* do not live *so*, will *they* not be inclined to think, nay, will they not have Cause to suspect, that our Doctrine is not true, or not of such Importance as we say it is? And with such a Prejudice against us, how earnest soever we may be in persuading, we shall never prevail with *them* to do, what they see *we ourselves* do not. For

as long as the first and best Rule of Oratory is wanting, that of our *own* good Life, all the Rules of Art will fail us; and we shall never be able to do any good.

The Apostle therefore, who well knew the Efficacy of a good Life in a *Christian Preacher*, begins his Advice to *Timothy*, with *taking heed to Himself*. And here must every *Christian Preacher*, as well as *Timothy*, begin, if he would preach with any Success. For we must first take Care, that we be good Men *ourselves*, before we can hope to make *others* so; we must study to be Guides as well as Teachers, and shew by our *Lives*, as well as by our *Sermons*, *what Manner of Persons Christians ought to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness*.

As this must keep us from every *Thing that is evil*, it must keep us also from every *Thing that has the Appearance of it*; and abridge us in many Things, in which we have Liberty; lest the Use of our Liberty should *offend any that are weak*. It is the Apostle's Rule to all, and especially to us, that we *give no Offence either to the Jew, or to the Gentile, or to the Church of God*, i. e. either to them that believe, or to them that believe not: And it requires great Prudence and good Understanding to know what is *expedient* in all such Cases; that we may
be

be blameless in the Sight of Men, as well as in the Sight of God; and *no one may have any evil Thing to say, or so much as to suspect of us.*

So far must we *take heed to Ourselves, that we may be Ensamles to the Flock*; that we may be *Patterns of all good Works*; and give no Offence in any Thing, that the Ministry be not blamed. —

This good Foundation being laid, we must in the next Place,

Take heed to our Doctrine, that it be sound and good, in all things agreeable to the Doctrine of Christ; we must neither conceal or disguise the Truth; but teach Men plainly, what they must do to be saved; and upon what Principle they must do it, that they may be saved.

We may preach many Things that are good, which yet have Nothing of Christianity in them; the Principles and Duties of Morality are both good, so far as they can lead us; but they cannot lead us to Heaven; they may through the Mercy of God save an honest Heathen, who never heard of Christ; but they cannot save them who have heard of Him; for (as Dr. Scott well observes, in his Book called *The Christian Life*) “where Christianity hath been made known, and sufficiently proposed, we cannot be good Men, unless we believe it; and if we believe it, we cannot be good Christians, unless we practise upon it.”

For the Gospel opens to us a new, and wonderful Scene of Knowledge; a Scene, that reaches from Earth to Heaven; and from the Beginning of the World to the End of it; and discovers to us (what human Nature wanted, but what human Reason could not discover) the Way and Means, by which we are to be made happy for ever. Here we see, that we are not now in the same State, in which we were first created; nor able of ourselves to attain that Happiness, for which we were first designed; but that we are by Nature corrupt, liable to Sin, and Death, and the Displeasure of God; and from Nature alone can have no Remedy for these Evils. — But through the *Mercy of God*, and *the Merits of Christ*, who came to put away Sin, to reconcile us to God, to abolish Death, and to bring Life and Immortality to Light, we have the Promise of the *Pardon of Sin*, of a *Resurrection from Death*, and of *eternal Life and Happiness in Heaven*. So the Apostle teaches, that *we are blessed with all spiritual Blessings, and made to sit in heavenly Places through Christ Jesus*.

This is the Doctrine of the Gospel, as we find in almost every Page of it; so that we must take heed, that we preach the same Doctrine; and teach Men *not to trust to their own Righteousness*,

ousness, but to the Righteousness of Faith; not to their own Works, but to the Grace and Mercy of God in Jesus Christ; because the same Apostle declares, that by Grace we are saved through Faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God; not of Works, lest any Man should boast.

On the other Hand, as the Grace of God which bringeth Salvation teaches the Necessity of Faith, it teaches also the Necessity of good Works; for *it teaches us, that denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World, that we may be capable of Happiness in the next: If our Faith has not such Effect upon us, as to purify our Nature, and renew us in the Spirit of our Minds, we cannot through Christ be admitted to eternal Life; we have the Apostle's Word for it (and the whole Tenour of the Gospel confirms it) that as Works without Faith are dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.*

If the Gospel then be the Word of Truth; and Truth be uniform and consistent with it self, we must be careful to keep it so; and teach all Men, that it is necessary *to believe in Christ; and that all that believe in Christ, must be careful to maintain good Works.* — And as the Knowledge of Salvation, and the Means of attaining it, are only to be learned in the Scripture; and the Scrip-
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ture-Doctrine is best expressed in the Language of Scripture; it should be our principal Study to enrich ourselves with this Knowledge, that we may communicate it to the People; and shew by our Doctrine, that we are true and *able Ministers of Jesus Christ*. — So far the Text obliges us to *take heed to our Doctrine*; and so far it obliges me to put you in Mind of it. But it will not become me to say more upon the *Method of Preaching*: That Instruction will come better from *One* more able to give it; and from *Him* we shall all this Day both with Pleasure and Profit receive it. *

But you will excuse me if I add a few Words upon the *Manner of Preaching*; to which I am led by a *new Book*, called *British Education*. † In which so much is said in Praise of *Oratory*, as tends not a little to the Dispraise of the *Clergy*; and though *our Office* is spoken of with very great Respect, *we* are spoken of with very little; because “ we are altogether unequal for the Dis-
“ charge of it.” For it is said, “ that without
“ the Power of speaking, and Skill in Oratory,
“ (which few or none of us are allowed to have)
“ the End of our Institution can never be an-

* This alludes to His Lordship's Charge, (which I had heard in another Place, and knew would be the same) upon the *Method of Preaching*. † *British Education*, by Thomas Sheridan, A.M. 8vo. London 1756.

" swered; that deprived of these, the Pulpit is
 " at best useless, and the Preacher a Cypher;
 " that the Want of this is probably one main
 " Cause of the Contempt, into which our Order
 " is fallen; and the great Source of Irreligion
 " and Infidelity too; for we preach in such a
 " Manner, as to disgust rather than edify those
 " that hear us; and are content to deliver the
 " sublimest Truths in Tones of Fiction; so that
 " for Want of Skill in speaking, our Know-
 " ledge and Piety are of little Use to the World."
 This, and a great deal more of the like Kind,
 you may read in the 15th Chapter of that Book,
 and in some other Pages of it.

I could wish that the ingenious Author,
 though he had been more profuse of the Charms
 of Oratory, had been more sparing of our De-
 fects; and not set up the one as a Foil to the
 other. For though I would not suppose, that he
 wrote with a Design to lessen us; yet what he
 has wrote, may probably have that effect; un-
 less we can prevent it, and retrieve our Credit,
 by removing the Cause of Complaint. But
 how shall we be able to do this? For the same
 Author says, " That the bad Habits we have
 " acquired, cannot be removed but by the dili-
 " gent Assistance of skilful Persons; and none
 " such are to be found."

But

But let us, my Brethren, for our own Sake, and for the Sake of Religion, see what we can do for ourselves; and resolve to do what we can: We cannot perhaps, through a Defect in Education, attain to all the Skill in Oratory, which we could wish to attain to; viz. An agreeable Tone of Voice; a graceful Gesture; a proper Action; and such Arts as I cannot describe to you, because I am a Stranger to them my self; But yet, I hope, we may attain to so much Skill in speaking, as not to defeat the End of our Institution; but to preach with good Success to all that are disposed to hear and obey the Truth.

It has been before observed, that to *instruct* and to *persuade* are the two main Points of our Office, as Preachers; Thanks to the Apostle then, who by his Advice in the Text has qualified us for both. For if we take heed to our *Doctrine*, we shall be supplied with the best Means of *Instruction*; if we take heed to *Ourselves*, we shall be supplied with the best Means of *Persuasion*; and as it is our Duty to preach good Doctrine, it must be our Desire to enforce it; that as our own Hearts are affected with it, the Hearts of the People may be so too. — This will naturally lead us to so much *Elocution* as to be heard; to so much *Plainness* as to be understood;

stood; and to so much *Earnestness* as to make an Impression upon the Minds of them that hear us.

And when sound Doctrine is thus preached, and recommended by a good Life, though some of the Arts of Oratory be wanting, “ the Pulpit will not be useless, or the Preacher a Cypher; but our Knowledge and Piety will be of great Use to the World:” We have the Apostle’s Authority for it in the Words before us, that whosoever continues to preach sound Doctrine, and continues to live agreeable to the Doctrine he preaches, though he be not a *complete Orator*, will at least be an *useful Preacher*; and effectually answer the End of his Institution; *for in doing this, saith he, thou shalt both save thy self, and them that hear thee.*

II. This is the *Reward* proposed for our Encouragement in our *Duty*. If by our good Lives, and good Doctrine, we propagate Religion and Virtue in the World, we shall save ourselves and them that hear us from endless Misery; and advance ourselves and them to endless Happiness; — That Happiness for which we were made; that which we lost by the Sin of the first Man; and which we could never have regained, had not Christ come into the World

to put away Sin, and regain it for us by the Sacrifice of himself.

For this gracious End he came into the World; for the same End he revealed his Doctrine; and appointed Preachers in his Church, that all Men might know what he had done for them; and what they must do for themselves to attain that Happiness.

In this Work are we employed under Christ. How honourable then is our Office! how useful and beneficial to Mankind! We teach them not how to be rich and great in this World; (perhaps we should be more followed, and more admired, if we did so;) but we teach them how to attain true Happiness in the next; such Happiness as this Life is not capable of, either for Excellency or Duration; because it is to *continue for ever*; and is such as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive it.*

To encourage us in the good Work, in which we are employed, we have the Promise of a *Reward* in that happy State. In this Life we are not to expect any; for we know that the good Things of it, though the Allotment of God, are not designed as Rewards for Service done; but as Talents for Improvement to be made: If any of these are given us, we may

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accept and enjoy them, as the Gifts of God ; but must not forget, that we are answerable for the Use of them to him that gave them.

But the *Reward* we look for is in a better Place ; and *if we wait with Patience*, it will be given us, when our Work is done ; for *in due Season we shall reap, if we faint not*.

This is the Hope that is in us ; the common Hope indeed of all Christians ; that upon which they are to act in the several Stations of Life ; and which they are to have in View in all the Good they do upon Earth : This we propose to *them*, to support and encourage them in *their Duty* ; and *this* we must propose to *ourselves*, to support and encourage us in *ours*. For *we*, and *they*, are all to *serve the Lord Christ* ; and what we do, we are to *do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto Men* ; knowing, that from him we shall receive a *Reward for our true and faithful Service*.

And this *Reward*, we are assured, will not only be great and glorious, but proportionable to every Man's Labour. For when the Time of Recompence is come, that the *Labourers are to have their Hire, the Judge of all the Earth will do right* ; all Honours will then be distributed with an impartial Hand ; and every Man will receive according to his Works. He that by

his Life and Doctrine has done the least Good, shall not be unrewarded ; but he that has done most, will be deemed worthy of Honour according to the Good he has done ; and, as our Lord expresses it, *will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Now if Heaven be preferable to Earth, and Things eternal to Things temporal, what greater Encouragement, my Brethren, can we desire, than what our Lord and Master has given us ? and what do we want more, to animate us in our Duty, and to make us exert ourselves in it ? If the Prospect of Honour and Interest in this World be the common Excitement to other Men to do what is *great*, how much more must the Prospect of Honour and Interest in Heaven excite *us* to do what is *good* ? For *here* after all *their* Pains, they often fall short of *their* Hope ; *there* we shall certainly attain *ours* ; *here* they may not be able to advance themselves by *all they can do* ; *there* we certainly shall advance ourselves, if *we do what we can* ; and how low soever we are in this World, and how little soever we are esteemed in it, we may be made to sit in high Places, and be greatly esteemed in the Kingdom of God. — Who would not think then that *Solomon* had more Knowledge of Heaven, than we are willing to allow him ;
when

when he has said in his Book of *Proverbs*, 11. 30.
that *he that winneth Souls is wise?*

From what has been said upon the Text, allow me to make an Application; though *the Business of the Day* will not allow it to be a long one.

1. If we take heed to *Ourselves* as we ought to do, let us not be dejected, if we meet with such Usage from the World as we ought not. It may be, that with all our Care we cannot gain Esteem; but we shall not deserve Contempt: we may not by all we can do, be had in Honour; but we shall not by any Thing we do, be had in Disgrace. Men may disparage our Office, but we shall not debase it; and if they will speak evil of us, only because we belong to Christ; our Comfort is, that our Master was revil'd in like Manner; and our Support will be, that we suffer in a good Cause, as our blessed Lord suffer'd before us: And well *may we rejoice*, as the Apostles did, *that we are counted worthy to suffer Shame for his Name.*

But if we are careful not to give *any real Cause of Offence*, why should you, my Brethren of the Laity, be forward to ridicule or revile us; as if we were all bad Men? If you are truly good, you can have no Pleasure in it; if you are not, you can receive no Benefit by it; it adds no Credit to the one, and must be a Discredit

credit to the other. — You may say in your Excuse, “ that *it is the Custom or Fashion of the Times;*” but I may say in answer to it, that in *this*, as in many other Things, “ the Custom or Fashion of the Times is not good;” it is evil to ridicule and revile them, whom you ought to esteem very highly in Love for their Work’s Sake; and you know, that you should not follow a Multitude to do Evil.

2. If we take heed to our *Doctrine*, that it be sound and good; and strive to do all the Good we can by preaching it; our Intention will be approved of God, though our Doctrine be not regarded of Men. It may be, that we cannot do all the Good that we would; but our Satisfaction will be, that we have done all that we could: We endeavour to make Men wise unto Salvation; but they will not be made wise unto Salvation by us; we are sincere, though we are unsuccessful; and if we cannot save them, we may hope at least to save ourselves.

But why should not you, my Brethren of the Laity, desire to be as happy, as we would have you; and mind the Things that will make you so? The End of our preaching is *for your Instruction*; your Instruction in *Righteousness*, the Means to Happiness; if this depends more upon your Disposition for hearing, than upon our Ability

Ability in preaching, why should you not be disposed for *the Words of eternal Life*? Let me beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, to *lay aside all Filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, and to receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls; to hear it with an honest and good Heart, and to bring forth the Fruits of it, in a sober, righteous, and godly Life.* — Then at the *Judgment of the great Day*, when we must all give Account of ourselves to God, we may be found worthy of eternal Life; and hear that joyful Sentence pronounced by Christ; *Well done ye good and faithful Servants, enter ye into the Joy of your Lord.* Amen.

F I N I S.

Why in preaching, why should you not be
diffused for the benefit of eternal life? Let me
ask you therefore, brethren, by the Mer-
cy of God, to lay aside all ill-will and dis-
cord, and to receive with
the greatest of hearts, which is able to
your souls; to hear it with an honest and
heart, and to bring forth the fruits of it.
Let us, therefore, and gladly I do. — Then as
the judgment of the great Day, when we must
give Account of ourselves to God, we may
be found worthy of eternal life; and hear that
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done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into
the Kingdom of your Father.



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